

They're tasty, functional, beautiful, and strong. And they're just a sampling of products "Made in Indiana."

By Sally Campbell Grout

When you find something "made in Indiana," you're sure to find something that's carefully crafted and well worth treasuring.

**From their kiln to your oven.**

Want to make that special dinner even more inviting? Serve it in stoneware from Clay City Pottery (800-776-2596). Since 1885, four generations of the Griffith family have operated the business, and while some procedures and equipment have been updated, many processes from the early days are still in place. The clay itself is still processed right at the pottery, with stones and impurities removed by running the clay through screens. What's more, they're still using a large kiln that was built in 1927. And while you may picture a potter spinning away at a wheel, that's not exactly the case. For the past 100 years or so, it's been shaped by molds and a process called "jiggering." (Pottery founder Beryl Griffith designed many of the molds that are still in use.) Today, the stoneware bowls, pie plates, pitchers and other items from Clay City Pottery come in several colors. Plus, they're safe for use in the oven and the microwave. (Just don't put them in a preheated oven!)

**What happens before the big hit.**

Anyone who has seen the movie "The Natural" knows that the right bat in the hands of the right player can make magic. At Hoosier Bat Company in Valparaiso (800-228-3787), they help create a little bit of that magic every day. Hoosier Bat Company makes wooden bats that are used by several major and minor league players. One of the company's "star players" is the WOODFORCE 2000, a patented three-piece bat, with ash in the handle, hickory in the sweet spot, and maple on the barrel end that retains the look and feel of an all ash bat.

**Pucker up and say "pickles!"**

If your idea of pickles is limited to "dill" or "sweet," you're missing out. Sechler's Pickles (800-332-5461) in St. Joe makes no less than 39 kinds of pickled items, and each deserves place on your plate. Back before World War I, Ralph Sechler ran a pickle station for the D.M. Sears Company. Eventually, he became a pickle entrepreneur, selling kegs and barrels of pickles and relish to restaurants while his wife Anne worked in their farmhouse kitchen hand packing jars for consumers. Today, that farmhouse is the office for what's now a major pickle producer, whose flavors include Sweet Heat Mixed Pickles, Candied Sweet Midgets, Kosher Dill Tomatoes, and Hot Hungarian Banana Peppers. You can find

Sechler's Pickles in many stores, and you can order them directly. Tours of the plant are also available from April through October. Call for times.

### **Making beautiful music.**

William Rees is a biologist by training, but he's been building stringed instruments since 1972. In 2000, after a three-year search for the right location, William Rees Instruments moved to Rising Sun. Why here? It turns out that this charming Indiana town is central to 70 percent of the William Rees Instruments Midwestern customer base. The new facility is home to the William Rees Instruments shop, office, and a harp gallery called Harps on Main (812-438-3032). There's also a performance area where you may hear an acoustic instrument concert. Want to do more than just listen? Harps on Main employs an in-house harp teacher who is also the Harps on Main manager.

### **To pancakes...and beyond!**

What tastes great on ice cream or pancakes, as a glaze for meat, in salad dressings, in baked goods, and even as a drink mixer? It's not that tired maple syrup you use to drown your toaster waffles. It's Hickoryworks® (317-878-5648) hickory syrup. Several years ago, while husband and wife Gordon Jones and Sharon Yarling were felling trees on their 54 acres in Trafalgar, an elderly man asked if he could buy some fallen timber for firewood. The man noticed a shagbark hickory and told the couple of syrup his great, great grandmother made from the bark of such trees. The man gave the couple the recipe in exchange for free wood. Today, the syrup is sold to restaurants coast to coast. (And the couple has had to look beyond their own 54 acres for bark!)

### **From treetop to tabletop.**

You can walk down the aisles of any hardware store and find the tools you need to turn lumber into a bookshelf or a table. But how do you turn a tree into lumber? That answer is made clear at The Forest Discovery Center in Starlight (812-923-1590). A significant part of your tour of The Forest Discovery Center is a trip through the rough mill for Koetter Woodworking (812-923-8875). Along with making beautiful mouldings, doors, flooring, and blinds, Koetter Woodworking, through The Forest Discovery Center, helps educate the public about responsible forest management and the impact wood and wood products have on our daily lives. At The Forest Discovery Center, you can take the glass-enclosed skywalk through Koetter Woodworking's rough mill and watch logs become trim and moulding, without a so much as a spec of sawdust going to waste. You can also walk through an indoor forest, visit the live demonstration area workshop, watch a video staring Oakie Acorn, and see a 1,000 square foot mural created from small wood inlays.

### **So that's where those pretty purses come from.**

Back in 1982, while at the airport in Atlanta, lifelong friends Patricia Miller and Barbara Bradley Baekgaard noticed that most of the luggage they saw lacked a feminine flair. Within weeks, they had created a company, named for Barbara's mother, to rectify that situation. Located in Fort Wayne, Vera Bradley is committed to quality. Today, Vera Bradley products, which include handbags, luggage, and home items, are sold by more than 3,000 independent retailers nationwide--and through several international locations. But you may want to mark your calendar for May 3-May 5, 2006. Why? So you can shop at the next Vera Bradley outlet sale!

### **For lovely letters.**

If a computer generated, laser print letter is completely impersonal, its polar opposite would be a handwritten note on handmade paper. But where can you find such a thing? At Twinrocker Handmade Paper in Brookston (800-757-TWIN). Kathryn and Howard Clark started the company in 1971 in San Francisco; the need for affordable workspace brought them back to the family farm near Brookston. Lucky for Indiana. Their handmade papers are made from the finest cotton and linen rag, and are available in a variety of shapes and sizes and in degrees of thickness ranging from text to board weight. You can purchase watercolor paper, stationery and invitations, and custom-made paper. Twinrocker also offers fine letterpress printing and calligraphy services. If you want to know how these beautiful papers are made, you're welcome to participate in a lecture, workshop, or tour.

### **The way cheese was meant to be.**

If your kids think all cheese is perfectly square and comes in individually wrapped slices, maybe it's time you introduced them to the Graham Farms Cheese Factory (800-472-9178) in Elnora. Started in 1928 by Robert C. Graham, Sr., the company today produces nearly four million pounds of cheese and related dairy products. Graham Cheese uses milk from both small Amish farmers and large modern milking operations from the surrounding countryside. You're welcome to see the process. Call ahead to schedule a tour and see the making of the all-natural cheeses.

### **A "fun" idea lasts for generations.**

Back in 1917, Rilla Plyley put a plate of fudge on the shelf of the family store "just for fun." That fun idea is still around in the form of Plyley's Candies in LaGrange (260-463-3351). Plyley's originally started as a candy and soda fountain, and was a popular stop for travelers. In 1971, the company moved to a newly built factory just blocks from the small main street store where it all started. You're invited to take a tour and watch the candy-making operation in process. While much of it is done by machine, you'll see that the procedure still involves a lot of work by hand. Of

course, you'll want to take home a few treats, too! You'll find a large variety of chocolates and hard candy, along with many sugar free candies.

**Make your plans.**

To learn more about Indiana and other handmade goodies, visit [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).